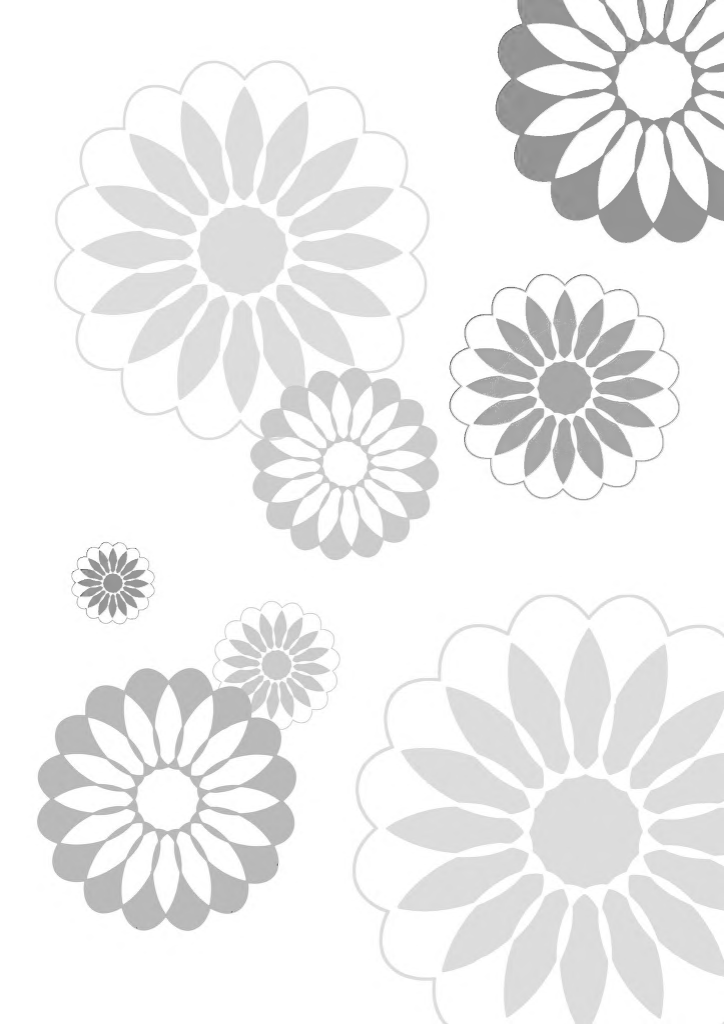
藤島康介
KOSUKE FUJISHIMA

39

ああっ女神さまっ

Oh My Goddess!



Oh My Goddess!

ああっ女神さまっ 39

STORY AND ART BY
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TRANSLATION BY
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LETTERING AND TOUCHUP BY
Susie Lee AND Betty Dong
WITH Tom2K

DARK HORSE MANGA™

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CHAPTER 243

Let Me Grant Your Wish

THIS MOVIE...
...PARADISE RESIDENCE...
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S ANY GOOD...
...AND DO I HAVE THE COURAGE TO ASK AOSHIMA TO GO...?

MY CHEST...
...IT'S ALREADY POUND-ING...
...AND IT'S SO FLAT.
I WONDER IF AOSHIMA WOULD EVER NOTICE ME...
...IF I HAD BIGGER BREASTS ...?
THY REQUEST...
HAS BEEN NOTED.
SHWOOM

WOOMF
WHAT THE...
...THEY'RE GROW-ING ...!
HEY! OW! OWWWW...

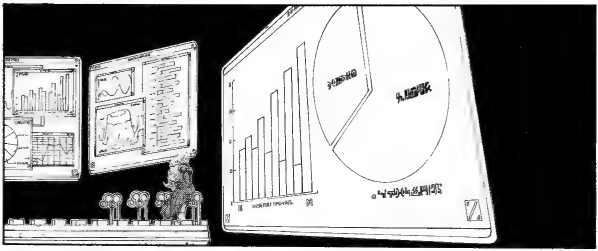
VRRMMB
nngh! nggg...
UM...
...HASE-GAWA?

IT'S J- JUST... A M- MOVIE...
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT ...?!
krik
kriiik
(Underblouse cam)
A- AO... SHIMA...
OH! YOU'RE MAKING A *MOVIE*? WHAT KIND IS IT...

...IT'S ...3-D...
BULGE
REALLY?
SPANGG

BLOMP
WHAPP

YOU WIN!
...



NICE, NIIICE...
...OUR SHARE OF THE MORTAL REALM IS SKY-ROCKETING.
WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO A TOTAL MONOPOLY.
AND WE'D HAVE NEVER GOTTEN THERE...
...UNDER OUR FORMER LEADER.

BUT I AM HAGAL...
...I AM THE CEO OF THE DEMON REALM!!
...WHY DO YOU COMPETE FOR MARKET SHARE OVER US?
UM-- COULD YOU REFRESH MY MEMORY...
YEAH, BET SHE'S SCREAMING THAT RIGHT NOW.

THE GODDESSES ARE JUST THE SAME, HMM?
WHEN WE GRANT HUMANS' WISHES, THE SUBLIMATION ENERGY RELEASED POWERS OUR OWN ACTIVITIES.
AND OF COURSE WE DEMONS AND GODS TUSSLE OVER TERRITORY...
RIGHT... COME TO THINK OF IT, SHE DID IT AS A JOB...
IS THAT TRUE?
...DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
...THAT'S WHY WE GRANT WISHES, TOO.
YES...

HALF RIGHT.
...BECAUSE THE NUMBER OF *HUMANS* IS LIMITED?
DO YOU KNOW WHY THAT IS?
...BUT WE'VE ARRANGED IT SO THE BALANCE WON'T TILT *TOO* MUCH TO ONE SIDE.
...IT INEVITABLY MOVES TO CRUSH THE OTHER.
IF THE BALANCE FAVORS ONE SIDE TOO MUCH...
...OVER YOUR FINITE HUMAN DREAMS.
MANY TIMES WE FOUGHT TO THE DEATH...

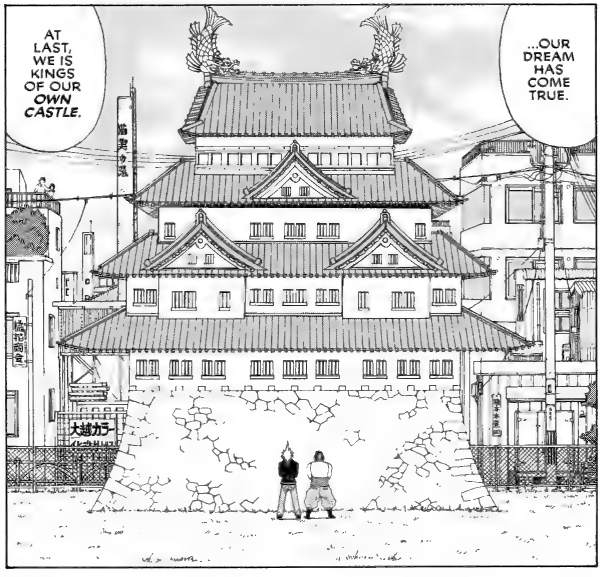
*See *Oh My Goddess!* vol. 17!

...DEAR URD AND YOU TO OUR SIDE, BUT...
THAT'S WHY I TRIED BRING-ING...
...ALTHOUGH THE BALANCE HAS TILTED TOWARDS HEAVEN RECENTLY.
IT'S MEANT TO REGULATE OUR STRUGGLE...
YOU LEARNED ABOUT THAT A WHILE AGO.

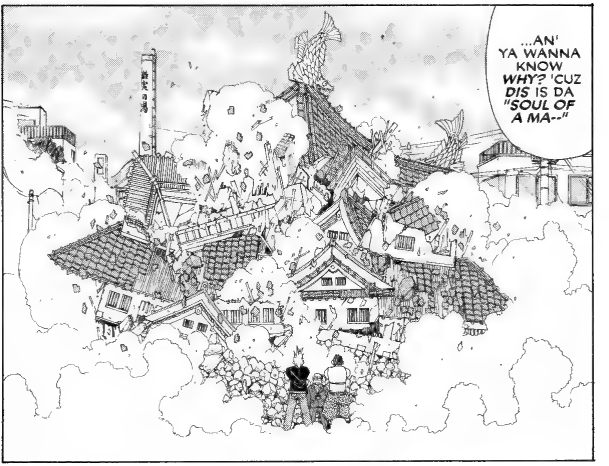
WELL, A BIT IS... YES.
...THEN IT IS ALL BECAUSE OF ME?
WHY WOULD IT BE *BELL'S* FAULT ...?
BECAUSE I'M CONTINUOUSLY GRANTING YOUR WISH, KEIICHI.

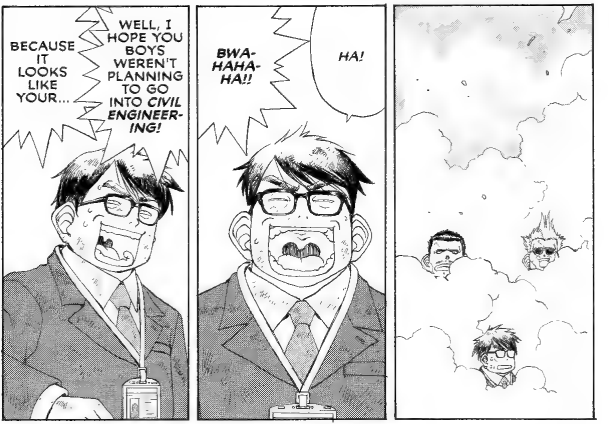
...BUT I GUESS MY UNDERLINGS DIDN'T SEE THE BIG PICTURE.
I THOUGHT I WAS DOING A PRETTY GOOD JOB KEEPING THINGS FROM TIPPING OVER...
...
HMF. IT'S NOT REALLY SUCH A BIG DEAL.
AT THIS RATE...
AND NOW THEY'RE WORKING *QUICK AND DIRTY* TO RACK UP AS MANY WISHES AS THEY CAN

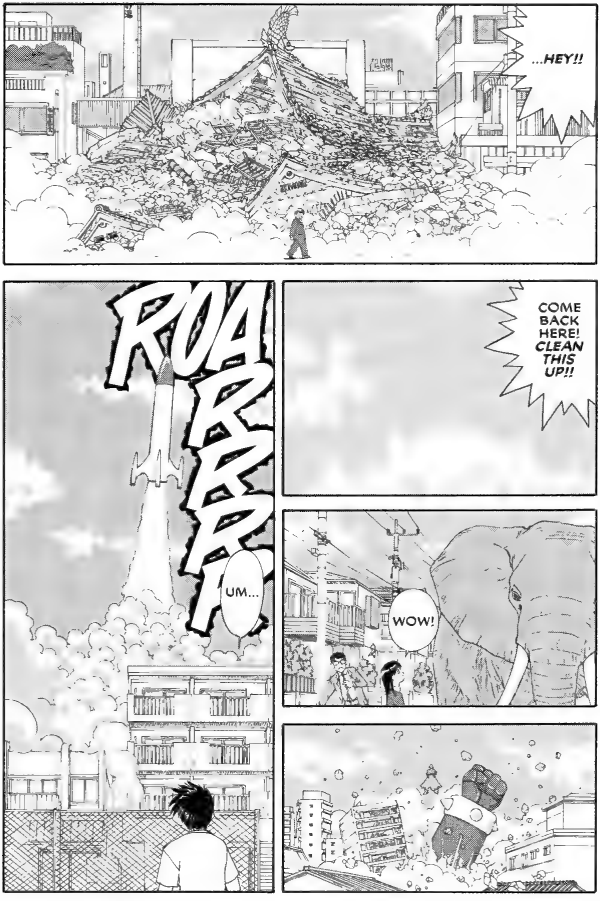
DAI-CHAN.
DEN-CHAN.


AT LAST, WE IS KINGS OF OUR *OWN CASTLE.*
...OUR DREAM HAS COME TRUE.

REMOVE THIS HEAP IMMEDI-ATELY!!
...'SCUSE ME, BOYS...
...BUT CAN'T YOU READ THE SIGN?!
NEKOMI INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
NO TRESPASSING
NO POSTING
NO CONSTRUCTION
OF MINIATURE SAMURAI CASTLES
FLAP
THY RE-QUEST...
...DESTROY IT!
WE REFUSE. WE AIN'T GONNA LET NO ONE...


...AN' YA WANNA KNOW *WHY?* 'CUZ *DIS* IS DA *"SOUL OF A MA--"*


BECAUSE IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR...
WELL, I HOPE YOU BOYS WEREN'T PLANNING TO GO INTO *CIVIL ENGINEERING!*
BWA-HAHA-HA!!
HA!


...HEY!!
ROARRR
UM...
COME BACK HERE! CLEAN THIS UP!!
WOW!

I HAVE NO INTENTION OF LEAVING THINGS LIKE THIS.
...YEAH.
SO...
...LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH...

BELL-
DAN-
DYYY
!!
LOOK
...
...OOOUUT
!!
WHAMM

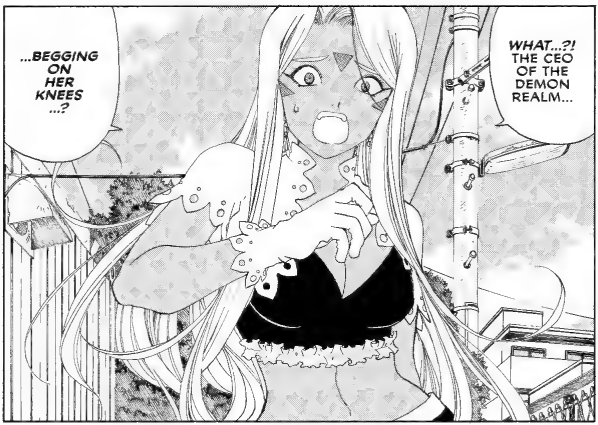
...ARE YOU OKAY?!
...
I AM *NOT OKAY* !!
URD!!
...WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE *THAT*, DEAR?

...SOMETHING AWFUL TO BELL-DANDY!!
I BET YOU WERE ABOUT TO DO...
...I'VE COME TO HUMBLY REQUEST HER HELP.
ON THE CON-TRARY...
SILLY CHILD. I WOULD NEVER DO THAT.

CHAPTER 244

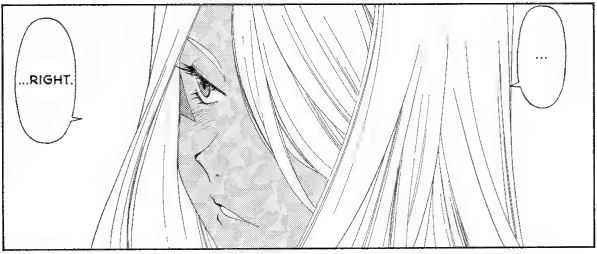
The Closing World

...LEND ME YOUR STRENGTH.
AND SO I ASK AGAIN...


...BEGGING ON HER KNEES ...?
WHAT...?! THE CEO OF THE DEMON REALM...

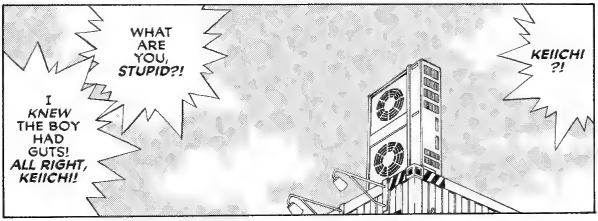
WHAT'S WRONG, URD DEAR?
ARE YOU *SHOCKED* TO SEE ME BOW MY HEAD TO A GODDESS?
EH? UM, WELL...
...MORE LIKE *SURPRISED*.
YOU STILL HAVE A LOT TO LEARN.
DO YOU THINK BY ASKING FOR HELP, I LOSE MY PRIDE...?
MY PRIDE IS IN KNOWING WHAT I WANT TO PROTECT...
...AND IN DOING WHATEVER NECESSARY TO PROTECT IT.

IF YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND THAT, YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT AS A LEADER.
I'LL BOW MY HEAD A *THOUSAND* TIMES IF NEED BE...
...BECAUSE ***NO ONE*** HAS MORE PRIDE THAN ME.

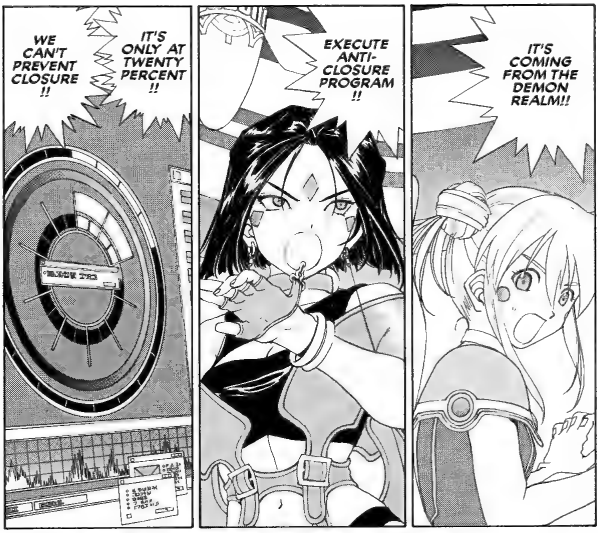

...
...RIGHT.

I UNDER-STAND.
I, GODDESS FIRST CLASS, UNLIMITED, BELL-DANDY...
...ACCEPT THE REQUEST OF HILD, RULER OF THE DEMON REALM.

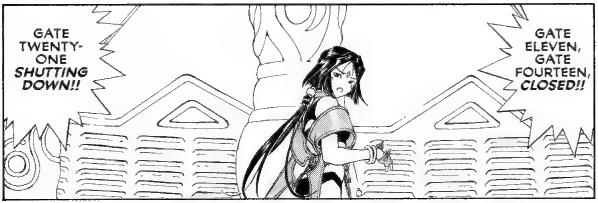
...EVEN IF I HAVE TO GO TO HELL...!
I'LL DO MY BEST...
EH?
CAN A *HUMAN BEING* ACCOMPANY YOU...?
HEY.


KEIICHI ?!
WHAT ARE YOU, STUPID?!
I KNEW THE BOY HAD GUTS! ALL RIGHT, KEIICHI!

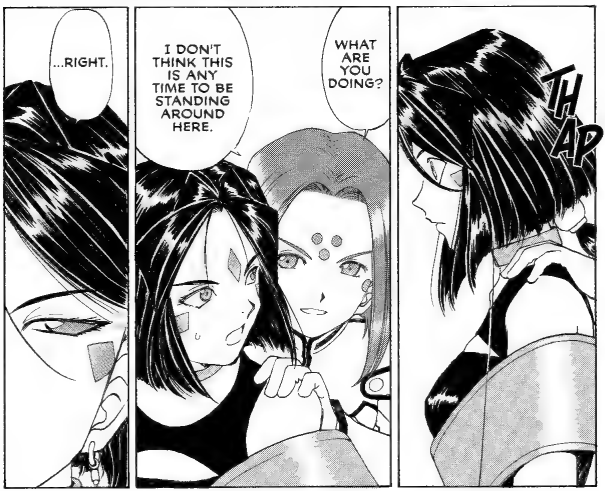
BREEDBREEED
Heaven
WE'RE GETTING READINGS OF DEMONS APPEARING ALL OVER EARTH!!
...SOMEONE'S TRYING TO RUN A CLOSURE PROGRAM ON THE GATES FROM OUTSIDE!!

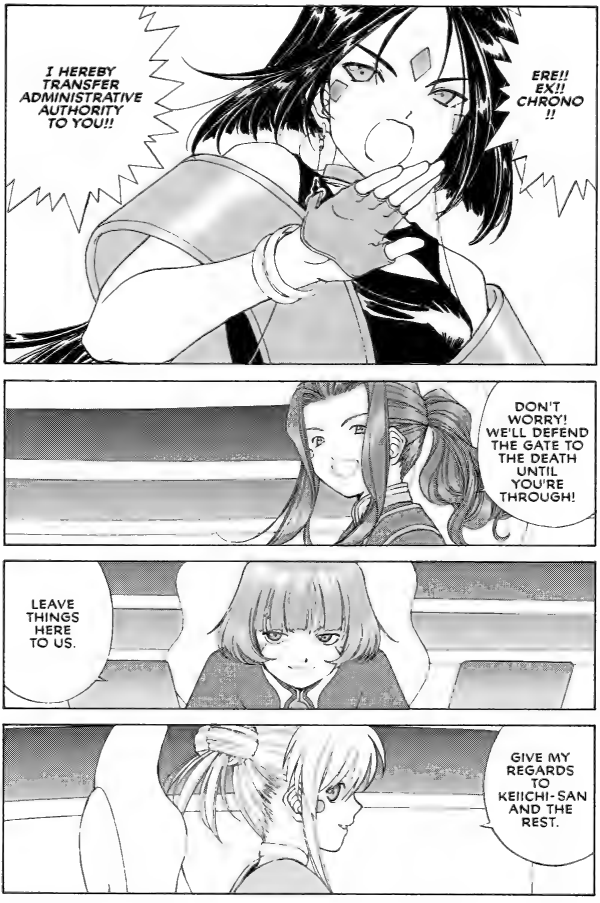

WE CAN'T PREVENT CLOSURE !!
IT'S ONLY AT TWENTY PERCENT !!
EXECUTE ANTI-CLOSURE PROGRAM !!
IT'S COMING FROM THE DEMON REALM!!

THEY'RE TRYING TO LOCK US INTO HEAVEN ...!!

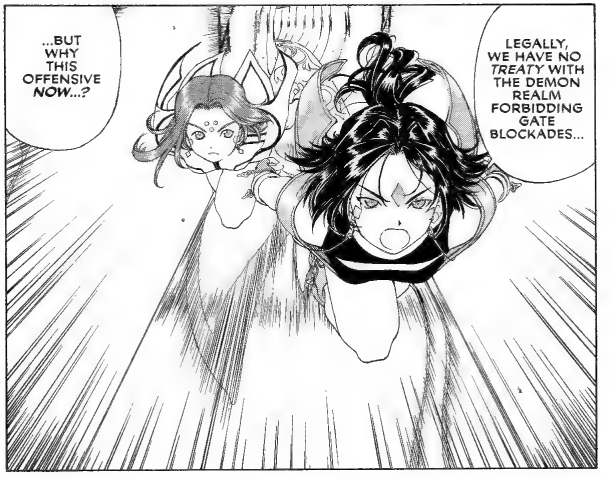

GATE TWENTY-ONE SHUTTING DOWN!!
GATE ELEVEN, GATE FOURTEEN, CLOSED!!

...


...RIGHT.
I DON'T THINK THIS IS ANY TIME TO BE STANDING AROUND HERE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
THWAP


I HEREBY TRANSFER ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY TO YOU!!
ERE!! EX!! CHRONO !!
DON'T WORRY! WE'LL DEFEND THE GATE TO THE DEATH UNTIL YOU'RE THROUGH!
LEAVE THINGS HERE TO US.
GIVE MY REGARDS TO KEIICHI-SAN AND THE REST.

...AND BE SURE TO BRING BACK *SOUVENIRS!*
JUST BECAUSE *EARTH* PEOPLE DO THAT.


...BUT WHY THIS OFFENSIVE *NOW...?*
LEGALLY, WE HAVE NO *TREATY* WITH THE DEMON REALM FORBIDDING GATE BLOCKADES...

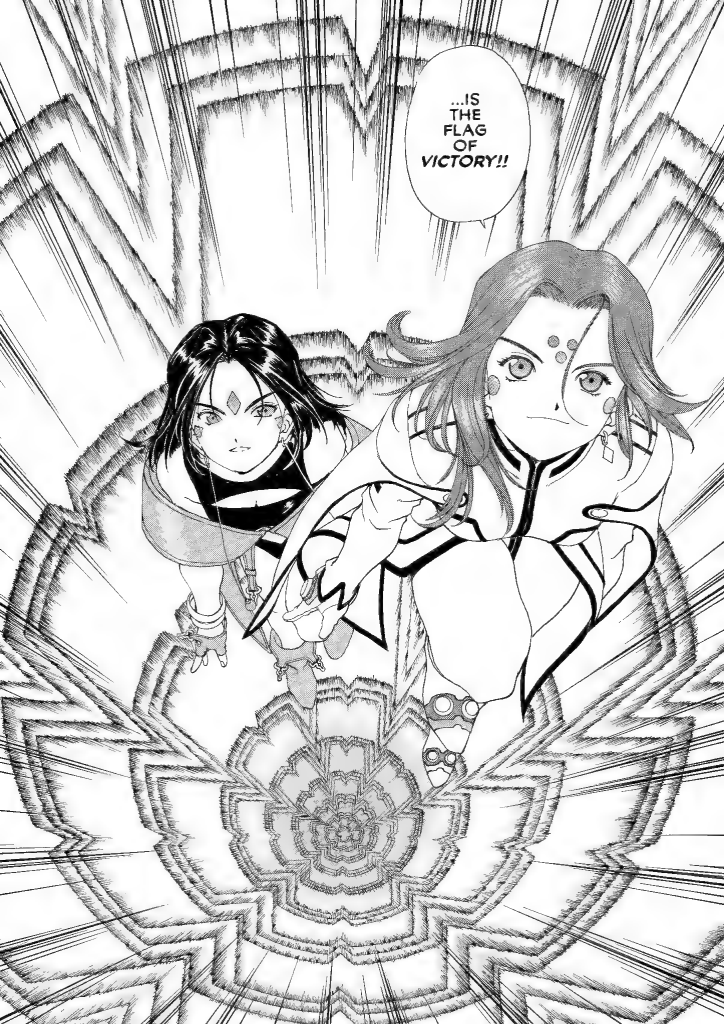
THERE ARE SEVERAL CONCEIVABLE POSSIBILITIES.
BUT THE ONE MOST LIKELY IS...
...HILD'S BEEN *OVER-THROWN ...!*
WHAT ARE YOU DOING BACK *THERE?!*
CAN'T YOU TWO KEEP PACE?! ARE YOU NOT *VALKYRIES* ?!
!

GATE!! HANG IN THERE JUST A LITTLE LONGER!!
PEORTH'S NO SLOW-POKE EITHER...
LIND... YOU'RE JUST TOO FAST!!
...THAT MEANS THEY'LL TAKE OUT THEIR BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO DOING SO.
IF HILD HAS FALLEN, AND THE DEMON REALM IS TRYING FOR ALL-OUT VICTORY IN THE SHARE WAR...
I'M BARELY HOLDING ON, YOU KNOW?! HUUURRRYYY!!
IT'S HARD, YOU KNOW?!

BUT WHAT ...?!
THIS MAY NOT BE THE RIGHT TIME TO MENTION THIS, BUT...
PEORTH !!
HUH ?!
I NEVER KNOW WHERE TO LOOK WHEN I'M BEHIND YOU...

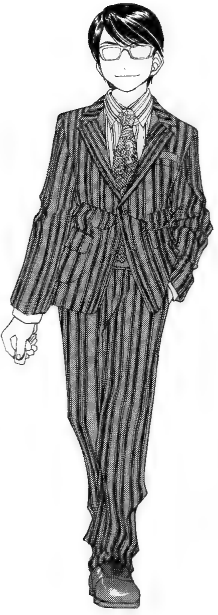
MAYBE I'LL TRY ON YOUR OUTFIT WHEN WE GET BACK.
...THIS IS *REALLY* NOT THE RIGHT TIME.
BUT YOU KNOW, IN EARTH MOVIES, "WHEN WE GET BACK" IS ALWAYS A RED FLAG! IT MEANS TRAGEDY AHEAD!
...MY, WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE.
VWOOM
VALKYRIES AREN'T FROM EARTH. AND THE ONLY FLAG *WE* RAISE...

I'M LOSING IT, YOU KNOW?!
SHING
...THEY MADE IT.


...IS THE FLAG OF VICTORY!!

OH MY GODDESS!

TOSHIYUKI AOSHIMA

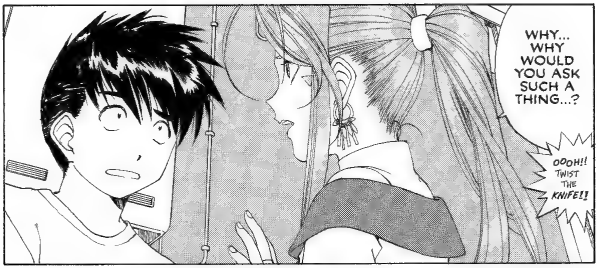


CHAPTER 245

Risking All

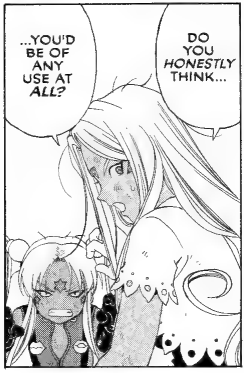
SO... CAN A HUMAN GO WITH YOU...?
...IT'S TOO DANGER-OUS!!

ARE YOU A *TOTAL IDIOT?!*
PRETTY *COOL*, KEIICHI-KUN...
I SEE HE'S NOT THE ONLY IDIOT HERE.
WHAT'S *THAT?*
INSOLENT CHILD! HOW ***DARE*** YOU CALL THE CEO OF DEMONS AN IDIOT!!
EXCUSE ME, MOM! LAST TIME I CHECKED, YOU ***WEREN'T!***


WHY... WHY WOULD YOU ASK SUCH A THING...?
OOOH!! TWIST THE KNIFE!!

...THAT'S JUST TOO HARD FOR ME TO BEAR.

BELLDANDY, THINKING OF YOU GUYS IN TROUBLE...
...IN SOME PLACE I DON'T EVEN KNOW, COMPLETELY OUT OF REACH...


DO YOU *HONESTLY* THINK...
...YOU'D BE OF ANY USE AT *ALL?*

LOOK, GIVE IT UP, OKAY?

I DON'T WANT TO SOUND COLD HEARTED, KEIICHI...
...BUT YOU'LL JUST GET IN OUR WAY.
I'M AWARE OF THAT.
THEN WHY ARE YOU ASKING ?!
TUT, TUT, CHILD. WHY DON'T WE HEAR KEIICHI OUT?
I WANT TO HEAR...
...HIS REASONS.

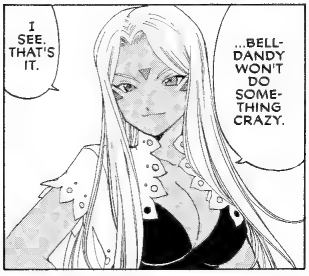
EVEN MORE SO THE HARDER THE MISSION IS...
BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I SHOULD GO.
YES, I KNOW I'LL PROBABLY JUST BE A BURDEN...
BUT THE SITUATION WE'RE GOING INTO IS SO DANGEROUS THAT I MAY HAVE TO *REMOVE* IT. DO YOU UNDERSTAND ...?
KEIICHI, I KEEP A *LIMITER* ON MY POWER WHEN I'M HERE ON EARTH. IT'S TOO DANGEROUS TO USE AT FULL STRENGTH.

YEAH.
BELL-DANDY'S GOING TO GIVE IT HER *ALL*.

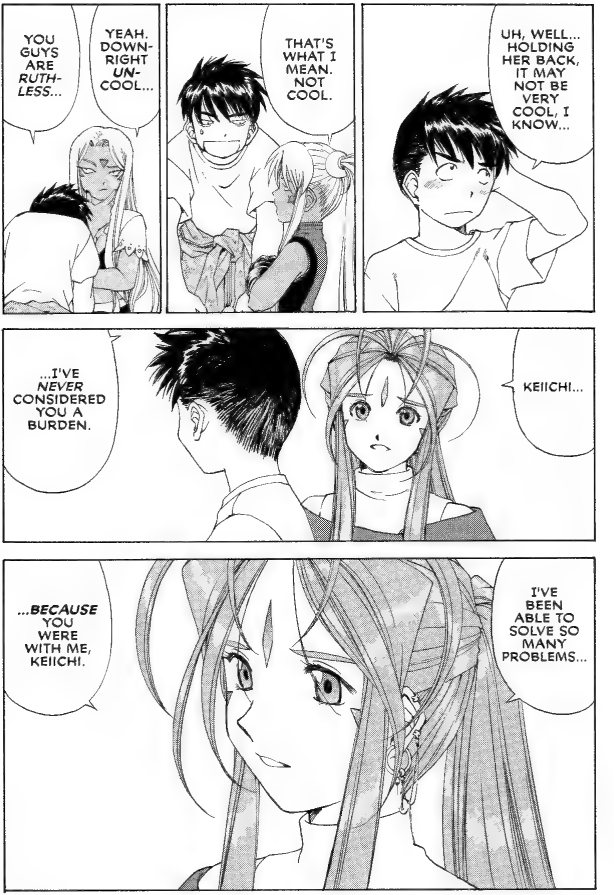
SHE'LL GIVE IT HER BEST, AND WHEN THAT'S NOT ENOUGH...
...SHE'LL GIVE IT *MORE* THAN HER BEST.
I SEE...

...IF I'M THERE...
IF WORST COMES TO WORST, AND SHE'S RUNNING OUT OF CONTROL...

BELL-DANDY NEEDS A BRAKE.


I SEE. THAT'S IT.
...BELL-DANDY WON'T DO SOME-THING CRAZY.

YOU CERTAINLY LIVED UP TO MY EXPECTATIONS.
HMMM... WELL PUT, KEIICHI.


UH, WELL... HOLDING HER BACK, IT MAY NOT BE VERY COOL, I KNOW...
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN. NOT COOL.
YEAH. DOWN-RIGHT *UN-* COOL...
YOU GUYS ARE *RUTH-LESS*...
KEIICHI...
...I'VE *NEVER* CONSIDERED YOU A BURDEN.
I'VE BEEN ABLE TO SOLVE SO MANY PROBLEMS...
...BECAUSE YOU WERE WITH ME, KEIICHI.

YOU GIVE ME COURAGE.
WHEN YOU'RE WITH ME, I FEEL SECURE.
BELL-DANDY...
THAT MEANS I HAVE A SERIOUS REQUEST TO MAKE.
...NOW THAT WE KNOW I'D BE OF SOME USE, I'M GOING.
NO, NO, NO...
...I WANT TO PUT YOU OUT OF IT.
I'M THE ONE WHO ALWAYS PUTS YOU IN DANGER, KEIICHI. SO THIS TIME...

...PLEASE PROTECT ME WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT!
YES!!
WITH PLEASURE !!

HE DELIVERED THAT PATHETIC LINE WITH STYLE.
AND YET, HE DIDN'T GET ONE BIT COOLER BY DOING SO. AMAZING, ISN'T IT?
WELL, NOW THAT'S SETTLED...

DOCK-
ING,
GO
...!!
NO!!
NO!!
NO!!
NO!!
...
...THE
THRILL
IS
GONE...
SOME-
HOW...

...THE TV'S ALL MINE!!
...WORK-ING MIDDLE-AGED MEN...
THE DIET CONTINUES TO SPIN ITS WHEELS...
...COULD THIS BE...
I CAN MAKE ALL THE GADGETS I WANT!!
EAT ALL THE ICE CREAM I WANT!!

WELL, LET'S GET STARTED...
WHAM
KSHANGG
BELL-DANDY ?!
STOMP
STOMP
URD?! SKULD ...!

BWAAAM
...ARE YOU OKAY?!
WELL? ARE YOU ...?

ICE CREAM... THOSE DEMONS ARE INDEED CRUEL...
OH, SO YOU *ARE* OKAY ...?
NO, I'M NOT!! THANKS TO *YOU!!*
DEMONS?! YOU DID THIS TO ME!!
SO SHE'S OKAY. EVERYTHING SEEMS OKAY HERE.
ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING ?!

...AH?!
WHA--?!
wh irl!!
HEY, SORRY.
I'M GONNA BORROW HER FOR A LITTLE BIT, ALL RIGHT?

HEY, LIND, DON'T...
HILD!! HALT!!
yikes!

UM... YOU DO REALIZE SHE'S GOING TO BE MIGHTY UPSET ABOUT THAT...?
...LOST THEM.
TSK...
WHY ARE YOU ASKING *ME*? WHY DON'T YOU JUST CAST ONE YOURSELF?
PEORTH. I REQUEST A MENDING SPELL.
SHE WILL?
IT'S NOT REALLY MY SPECIALTY...

BUT IT'S SUCH A BASIC SPELL! COME ON, I'M SURE YOU CAN HANDLE IT.
...I'M BETTER AT DESTRUC-TION.
KLANK
VVMMMMM
OBSERVE FOR YOURSELF.

NO APOLOGY NEEDED
FORGIVE ME
HRNG !!
shingg
WAAA!!

fsssshhh
74
BOOM

THAT WAS CLOSE...
SSSHHH
PEORTH. I REQUEST A MENDING SPELL!
LATER, OKAY?! RIGHT NOW WE'VE GOT TO GO AFTER HILD!!
...IF HILD ISN'T RUNNING THE DEMON REALM ANY LONGER...
...THEN WHAT DID SHE WANT WITH SKULD ...?

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S BOUND TO BE SOMETHING SINISTER! C'MON, LET'S GO!

I REALLY NEED TO PRACTICE THAT SPELL.

OH MY GODDESS!

HILD

CHAPTER 246

The Gates of Hell

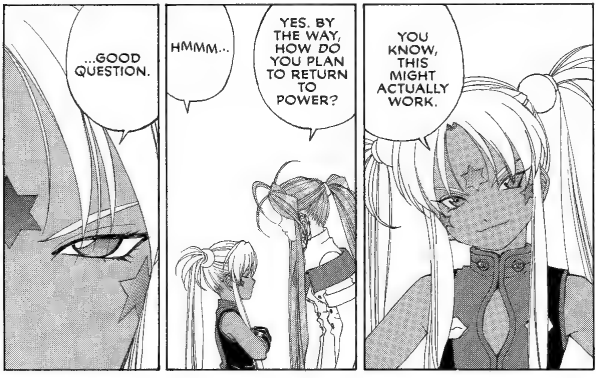
I'M BACK.
WHITE WHIRLWIND
KYAAA!!
...THREE !!
ONE, TWO...
GOT HER RIGHT HERE. READY?

BIG SIS! IT'S YOU!
...OH!
...ARE YOU OKAY?
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA...
WE'RE GOING SOMEPLACE DANGEROUS. YOU DON'T HAVE TO COME WITH IF YOU DON'T WANT.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS, SKULD.
HUH?
HUH?

BELLDANDY! YOU KNOW I WON'T LET MY DEAR BIG SISTER FACE DANGER ALONE! I'D FOLLOW YOU ANYWHERE...
...EVEN TO HELL !!!
WOW!
EH?
YOU'RE TRULY THE GODDESS OF THE FUTURE!
EH?
HOW'D YOU GUESS?
clap clap

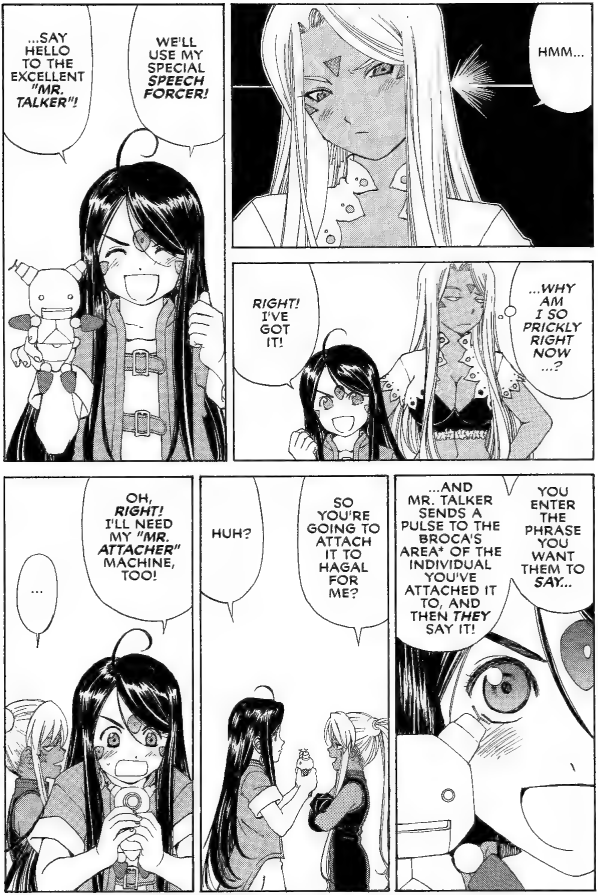
ME?
CHICKEN?
UM... ARE WE REALLY GOING TO...?
THANK YOU, SKULD.
OH, SO THAT'S WHAT YOUR BRAVE FACE LOOKS LIKE! BLUISH PURPLE!
WH-WH-WHY OF COURSE NOT!!!
...SWEET.
HEH HEH HEH...

...WHEN YOU'RE ALL TOGETHER.
YOU THREE DO MAKE A BETTER PICTURE...


...GOOD QUESTION.
HMMM...
YES. BY THE WAY, HOW DO YOU PLAN TO RETURN TO POWER?
YOU KNOW, THIS MIGHT ACTUALLY WORK.

THE EASIEST WAY WOULD BE TO FREE MY TRUE BODY FROM ITS PRISON...
...BUT ONLY THE *CURRENT* BOSS OF THE DEMON REALM CAN DO THAT.
OH, I SEE! THEN WE JUST HAVE TO PERSUADE HAGAL TO RELEASE YOUR BODY!
UM... YEAH, BELL-DANDY... BUT THAT MIGHT BE... DIFFICULT ...?

YOU SOUND AWFULLY CERTAIN.
I KNOW THAT GIRL'S PERSONALITY...
MORE LIKE *IMPOSSIBLE*.
YEAH... I AM.


...SAY HELLO TO THE EXCELLENT "MR. TALKER"!
WE'LL USE MY SPECIAL SPEECH FORCER!
HMM...
RIGHT! I'VE GOT IT!
...WHY AM I SO PRICKLY RIGHT NOW ...?
OH, RIGHT! I'LL NEED MY "MR. ATTACHER" MACHINE, TOO!
...
HUH?
SO YOU'RE GOING TO ATTACH IT TO HAGAL FOR ME?
...AND MR. TALKER SENDS A PULSE TO THE BROCA'S AREA* OF THE INDIVIDUAL YOU'VE ATTACHED IT TO, AND THEN THEY SAY IT!
YOU ENTER THE PHRASE YOU WANT THEM TO SAY...

*Named for French anatomist Paul Broca (1824-1880), who first discovered that speech is a localized function within the brain.

IT'D BE BEST IF I COULD GO MYSELF, BUT...
...THEY'VE PROBABLY RIGGED A FILTER FOR ME ON THE GATE.
THEN, WHAT'LL YOU DO?
WE'LL LEAVE *THAT* FOR LATER.
THE PROBLEM RIGHT *NOW* IS...
...HOW DO *YOU* ALL GET THROUGH ...?

ANYONE CAN PASS THROUGH TO THE DEMON REALM...
OUR GATES AREN'T THAT POORLY MADE THAT A HUMAN WILL BREAK IT, BOY.
DO YOU MEAN THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH *ME*...?
...SO WE'VE MADE IT ***INVISIBLE*** TO THE HUMAN EYE.
OF COURSE, WE DON'T WANT PEOPLE USING IT ALL THE *TIME*...
...AND THE GATE'S NOT FAR AWAY.

NOT TO MENTION... IT ONLY WORKS UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS.
SO, LIKE, WHERE IS IT?
WELL...
HERE.
VOOM
...I'LL SHOW YOU.
KWWWN

HUH? THIS LOOKS FAMILIAR...
HEY!! IT'S RIGHT NEAR OUR HOUSE !!
I PUT IT HERE FOR CONVEN-IENCE!
YOU'RE PROUD OF THAT, AREN'T YOU ...?
SO WHERE'S THE GATE ...?
I TOLD YOU... IT'S INVISIBLE.

WOW ...!
SEE IT NOW?
KWWWW
IS THERE A HUMAN ALIVE WHO CAN JUMP TO THAT GATE FROM THESE STAIRS?
YOU THINK SO?
STILL... COULDN'T SOMEONE STUMBLE INTO IT...?
IF YOU DO... GIVE IT A TRY.

OR BUILD SOMETHING ABOVE THIS STAIRCASE ...?
OR MAYBE SOMEONE'S GOING TO FLY A PLANE DOWN THIS STREET?
OKAY, LISTEN TO ME AGAIN.
BUT SUPPOSE THERE WAS A FREAK ACCIDENT AND...
...OR *CAN'T* PASS... THAN YOU THINK.
THERE'RE FAR MORE PLACES THAT HUMANS DON'T PASS...
YOU HAVE TO ENTER IT AT *EIGHTY KILOMETERS PER HOUR.*
I *SAID* WE SET CONDI-TIONS, DIDN'T I?

OH! OKAY, THAT WOULD KEEP PEOPLE OUT...
HMM...
...
IMMMM
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO GET IN, THEN?!
CALM DOWN, MORTAL.
HERE...
...I'LL LEND YOU GLÜHENDE HERZ.

HE CAN BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER, YOU KNOW.
AWESOME !!
SUPER-SONIC? REALLY ?!
...
...I'LL DIE!!
YOU CAN ADJUST THE SPEED, KIDDO.
NEXT CONDI-TION...
THERE'S MORE?

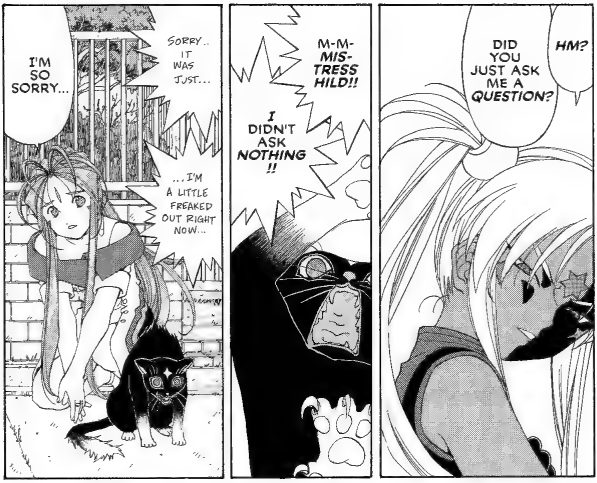
THE GATE CAN ONLY BE OPENED BY THREE DEMONS ACTING TOGETHER.
COMPLICATED, ISN'T IT?
LOOK AT IT THIS WAY...
...WE DON'T DISCRIMINATE.
IF THE CONDITIONS ARE MET, ANYONE CAN PASS THROUGH...
...GOD... DEMON... OR MORTAL.

THE GATES OF HELL ARE OPEN TO *ALL*.

I'M *ONE* DEMON...

...HOW CAN SHE BE SO TINY...AND STILL BE SO *SCARY*...?

...HERE'S TWO!
MEOWR?!
HEY, KID! WHAT'S THE IDEA?!
NOW FOR A THIRD...
TRUE. HE IS A DEMON.


DID YOU JUST ASK ME A QUESTION?
HM?
M-M-MISTRESS HILD!!
I DIDN'T ASK NOTHING !!
SORRY.. IT WAS JUST...
...I'M A LITTLE FREAKED OUT RIGHT NOW...
I'M SO SORRY...

...BUT WE ABSOLUTELY NEED YOUR HELP.
WILL YOU HELP US, VELSPER ...?

BELL-DANDY...
I'D FOLLOW YOU ANY-WHERE...
...EVEN TO HEAVEN !!!
REMINDS ME OF SOME-ONE.
CAN'T DENY IT.
...HMM.
IF ONLY SHE WERE HERE...

YES, I CAN ALMOST HEAR HER PATHETIC WHINING NOW. "MISTRESS HILD, MISTRESS HILD..."
MISTRESS HILD.
...MISTRESSSS HIILLDDD!
...HELLO, MARA DEAR!
AH!

OH MY GODDESS!

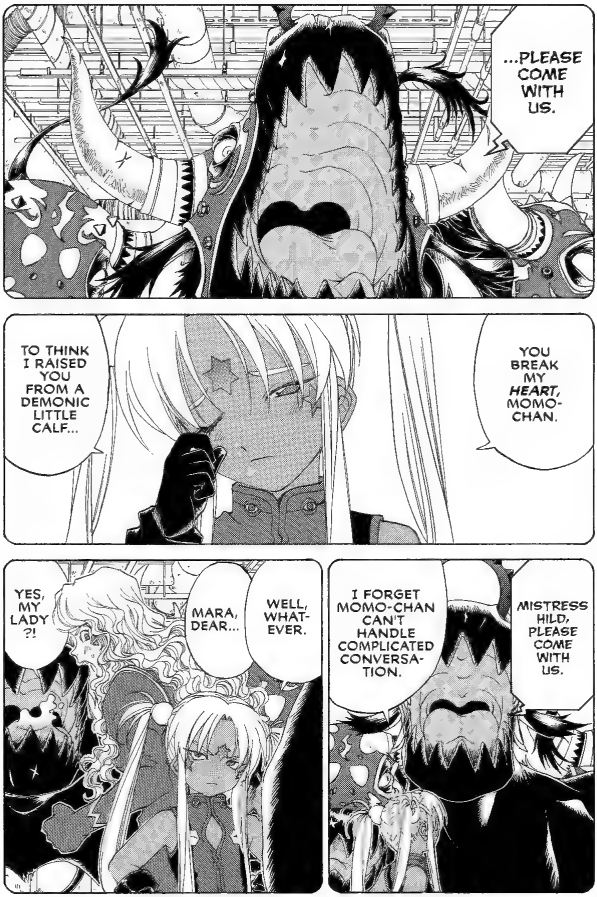
PEORTH & LIND

CHAPTER 247

Three Goddesses, Three Demons

Mistress Hiiiild...
...That was HARSH.
HMM... LOOKING A LITTLE RAGGED, MARA.
...BUT IT'S AMAZING YOU GOT OUT OF THERE INTACT.
Um... Yeah.

NOW I WONDER WHAT THEY WANT ...?
MIS-TRESS HILD...


...PLEASE COME WITH US.
YOU BREAK MY *HEART*, MOMO-CHAN.
TO THINK I RAISED YOU FROM A DEMONIC LITTLE CALF...
MISTRESS HILD, PLEASE COME WITH US.
I FORGET MOMO-CHAN CAN'T HANDLE COMPLICATED CONVERSATION.
WELL, WHATEVER.
MARA, DEAR...
YES, MY LADY?!

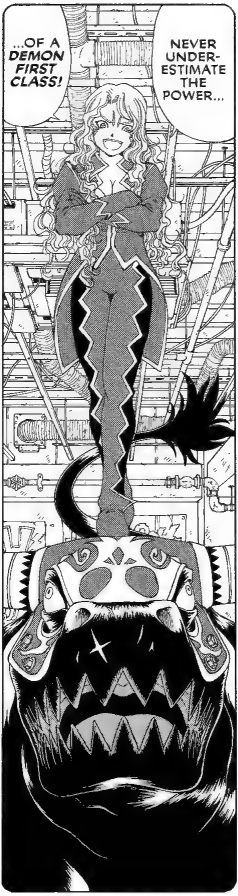
EH?! BUT...!!
...I'LL HOLD THEM OFF. YOU GET OUT OF HERE.
SHE'S ALWAYS ON MY CASE, BUT AT HEART SHE CARES ABOUT HER LOYAL STAFF...
WHAT CAN I SAY ...?
NO!! I'LL HOLD THEM OFF, MY LADY!

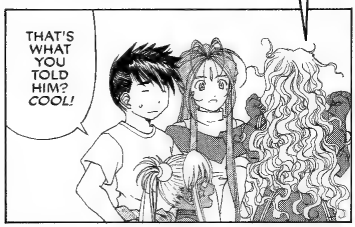
DEAR MARA...
GREAT! THEY'RE ALL YOURS!
Yes, Ma'am!
I can't let you do that! How about we fight them... Together!
YES, MA'AM !!

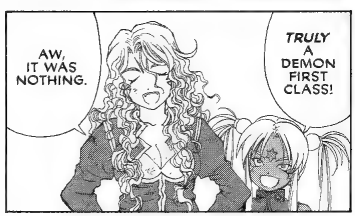
WAIT A MINUTE...
...
BRING IT ON!!
...
...
...OKAY, THEN.
...

KRAK
HA!!

...THE REST OF YOUR LESSON!!
AND NOW IT'S TIME TO GIVE YOU...


...OF A DEMON FIRST CLASS!
NEVER UNDER-ESTIMATE THE POWER...


THAT'S WHAT YOU TOLD HIM? COOL!


AW, IT WAS NOTHING.
TRULY A DEMON FIRST CLASS!

WELL, YEAH... BUT STILL, IT WAS A PIECE OF CAKE.
NOTHING? YOU'RE THE DEMON-WORLD CHAMP!
THAT'S 'CUZ...
BUT IF IT WAS A PIECE OF CAKE, WHY ARE YOU IN TATTERS?
!!
!!
!
!
Tempest of Destruction, to My Left...
Fires of Hell, to My Right Hand...

When These Hands Meet...
By Nature Shall Thee Be a Hurricane of Fire...
...And Extinguish All My Enemies!!
FWOOM

HA HA HA! ROUND AND ROUND!!!

...THIS IS A PIECE OF CA--
YEAH! HOW DO YOU LIKE *THEM* APPLES?! OR TO USE ANOTHER FOOD METAPHOR...
KWA!!
WHOOM
WHOOM
WHOOM
WAH !!
HURK!!

I KNOW, I KNOW.
BUT REALLY! IT WAS A PIECE OF CAKE!
...I SEE.
NO WONDER YOU ENDED UP LIKE THIS...
YOU'RE A DEMON FIRST CLASS...
...YOU HAD THE POWER.
AUTHORIZATION? WHAT AUTHORIZATION?
OKAY, SO, NOW THAT YOU'VE HAD YOUR CAKE, COULD YOU HELP WITH THE AUTHORIZATION?
YOU'RE JUST A LITTLE CLUMSY *USING* IT.
THANK YOU, MISTRESS!

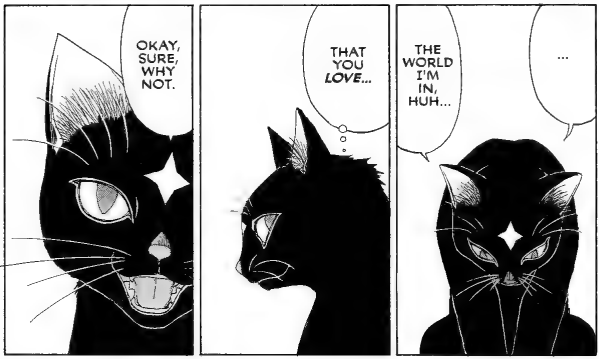
AUTHORIZATION FOR THESE KIDS TO PASS THROUGH THE DEMON GATE.
OH, GOSH. DIDN'T I TELL YOU?
THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU WITH?!
...WHAT?!
SAY...
BELL, DEAR... WHAT SHALL WE DO?
I'LL NEVER AGREE TO A REQUEST LIKE THAT...
FORGET IT! I'M OUT!!

PLEASE HELP US. WE HAVE TO PASS THROUGH THE GATE.
ALL I CARE ABOUT IS YOUR SAFETY.
...
NO, NO!! I CAN'T!!

YOU MEAN MORE TO ME THAN THIS WHOLE PLANET.
I ACCEPTED A REQUEST FOR HELP FROM THE LORD OF THE DEMON REALM.
YEAH, YEAH..
I *MUST* KEEP MY WORD.
I CARE ABOUT KEIICHI'S SAFETY SO MUCH.
AND I'LL PROTECT HIM.
BUT...

...AND MEGUMI...
I LOVE CHIHIRO...
...TAMIYA AND OTAKI...
AND I LOVE...
...I LOVE THIS WORLD WHERE EVERY-ONE I LOVE IS.
...AND I'LL PROTECT IT, TOO.
...I LOVE THIS WORLD, YOU SEE...

THIS WORLD...
...WHERE *YOU* ARE, TOO.


...
THE WORLD I'M IN, HUH...
THAT YOU *LOVE*...
OKAY, SURE, WHY NOT.

NICE FLIP, VELSPER.
LET'S SAVE THIS WORLD TOGETHER.
AND SO...

Such is the Land Where All Wishes are Granted...
Such is the Land Where in Chaos Light and Dark Entwine...
Such is the Land so Distant and so Near...

UPON THE AUTHORIZATION OF THREE OF DEMONKIND, *OPEN THIS, THINE GATE!*
MARA AUTHOR-IZES.
HILD AUTHOR-IZES.
VELSPER AUTHOR-IZES.

SET GATE RELEASE TIME AT...
...MAXI-MUM.
RELEASE!
MAXIMUM

CHAPTER 248

1/1,000,000 Crystallization

NOW WE CAN...
...PASS THROUGH?
OF COURSE.
WE'RE ALL SET.
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT MAXIMUM RELEASE TIME ...?
OH, THAT? JUST A FAIL-SAFE...

SIX HOURS...
SO I SET IT AT SIX HOURS, THE MAXIMUM.
THERE'S NO *GUARANTEE* WE'LL BE ABLE TO OPEN IT AGAIN.
kik
...SO, HOW ARE WE GONNA FREE YOUR MAIN BODY?

YEAH... I'LL NEVER MAKE IT THROUGH ALIVE.
I THINK I CAN MANAGE IT SOMEHOW IF I CAN JUST GET MY MINI SELF PAST THEIR FILTER...
THEY CAN DETECT YOU AT A *THOUSANDTH* OF YOUR POWER!
BUT, YOU *CAN'T*, RIGHT? EVEN AS A *DUPLICATE!*
BANG!!

THUD
WH-WHAT DID YOU JUST DO?!
...
tingg
tingg
ting
tink
tink
roll
roll

REVIVAL SPELLS! HURRY...
EVEN A DUPLICATE HURTS THE MAIN BODY IF IT DIES!!
YOU FOOL !!!
OH, WOW...
...I DON'T THINK I CAN GET USED TO THAT TRICK.
FLIP

YOU MADE MAMA SO HAPPY.
...THANK YOU FOR WORRYING ABOUT ME.
OH, MY LITTLE URD...
WHA... WHA... WHA....
FOOL.
?
Gleam

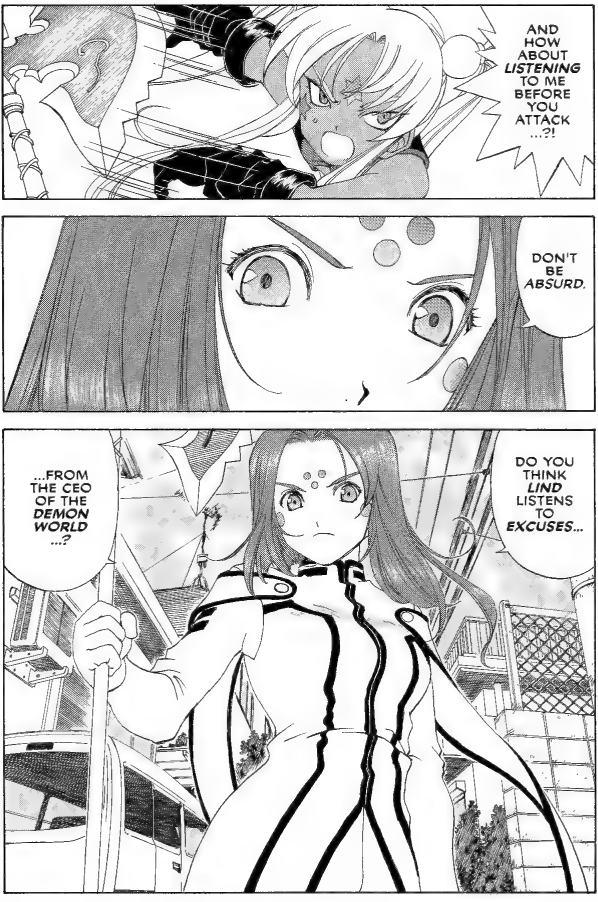
WELL, YOU MIGHT SAY HE'S HOLDING MY GUTS.
YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE AN ORGAN...
I SORT OF BLEW THAT OUT OF ME...
AH, I SEE IT WORKED.
...WHAT'S *THIS?*
eeeWWWW...
YOU ARE HOLDING ***CRYSTALLIZED HILD...*** THE ***ONE-MILLIONTH*** VERSION OF ME.
HEH-HEH. THAT'S ME IN ***ULTRA-CONCENTRATED FORM,*** A ONE-THOUSANDTH VERSION OF *THIS* ONE-THOUSANDTH VERSION.

NO KIDDING? YOU CAN DO THAT?
OH, PLEASE. YOU MEAN YOU CAN'T?
OF COURSE I CAN'T DO THAT!!
SO, UMM... WHAT DO I DO WITH IT?
GIVE IT TO ME A SEC.
OKAY.
HERE. HOLD ON TO IT, KEIICHI.
HUH? ME?
WHY ME?

NOW LISTEN. I WON'T AWAKEN UNTIL THE VERY, *VERY* LAST MOMENT, SO KEEP THAT IN MIND.
DON'T EXPECT A SECOND CHANCE.
G-GOT IT...
GOT IT?
BE SURE TO USE IT WHEN YOU'RE RIGHT NEXT TO HAGAL.
...OUR *ACE IN THE HOLE.*
BECAUSE YOU'RE PROBABLY...

NICE, NICE...
...THINGS ARE HEATING UP.
NOW, LET'S--
WAAAIT!!
...OH! LIND AND PEORTH.
!!

BOOM
FIRST URD, NOW YOU...
...DON'T GODDESSES EVER JUST SAY "HELLO" ...?
sigh REALLY...


AND HOW ABOUT *LISTENING* TO ME BEFORE YOU ATTACK ...?!
DON'T BE *ABSURD*.
DO YOU THINK *LIND* LISTENS TO *EXCUSES*...
...FROM THE CEO OF THE *DEMON WORLD* ...?

OH MY GODDESS!

MARA

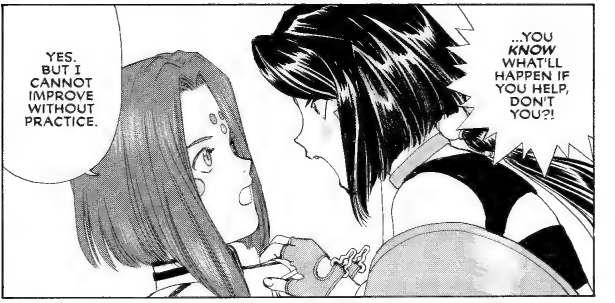
CHAPTER 249

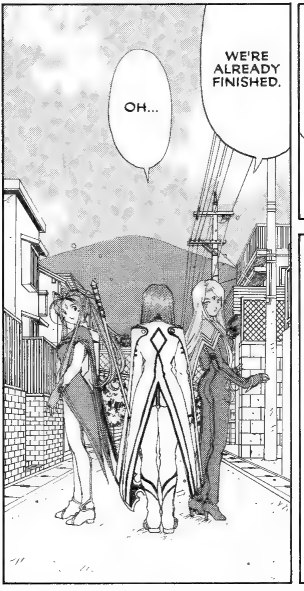
The Benefits of Misunderstanding

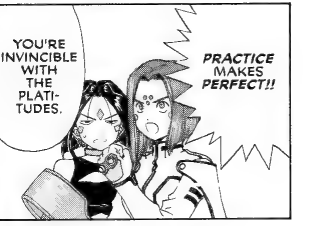
THERE IS *NOTHING* MORE I NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU.
...FOR BEING SO OFF GUARD, BUT...
KRAK
GOSH. I KNOW THERE'S NO EXCUSE...
WSSH

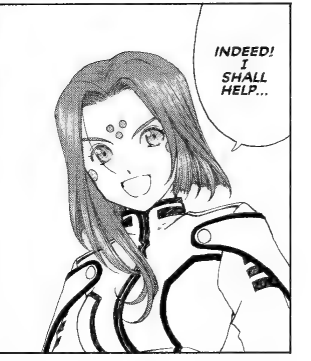
NOW, I CAN'T GET BACK ON MY OWN, SO I ASKED THESE THREE GODDESSES...
...AND WENT AFTER MORE MARKET SHARE ON THEIR OWN.
...YOU SEE, MY GIRLS TURNED ON ME, SEALED UP MY MAIN BODY...
...WE WERE JUST ABOUT TO LEAVE.
...PLUS KEIICHI, FOR HELP, AND...

YOU'RE DONE?
...YES.
SATISFIED?
ARE ALL VALKYRIES LIKE THIS...?
NOW THAT I'VE LISTENED TO YOUR EXCUSES.
...BUT THINK OF THE GODDESSES WHO GOTTA CLEAN UP AFTER YOU!
YOU MAY BE SATISFIED...
YOU DON'T NEED TO HELP!!
HMM! SORRY ABOUT THAT. LET ME HELP...


YES. BUT I CANNOT IMPROVE WITHOUT PRACTICE.
...YOU *KNOW* WHAT'LL HAPPEN IF YOU HELP, DON'T YOU?!


WE'RE ALREADY FINISHED.
OH...


YOU'RE INVINCIBLE WITH THE PLATI-TUDES.
PRACTICE MAKES *PERFECT!!*


INDEED! I SHALL HELP...

I WANNA GET BANPEI! OH YEAH, UM, AND MY TOOLS!
UM, I WANNA GO GET MY HELMET!
OH-KAAAY! EVERYONE READY?!
...SEE, I ONLY LOOK LIKE A KID.
...LO!!
IT CAN'T BE HELPED...

LOOK AT OUR PLACE !!!
GASP!!
SEE, I...
AH, UH...
HOW AWFUL...

IT'S AN ATROCITY... ABNORMAL... NON-EUCLIDEAN!
UM...
WHAT KIND OF MONSTER ...?!
ACTUALLY, NO, THIS IS...
...YOU'D STOOP EVEN TO THIS, HAGAL?
LOATHSOMELY REDOLENT OF SPHERES AND DIMENSIONS APART FROM OURS...!
UM.
LOOK UPON IT AND REMEMBER! THIS IS THE ENEMY WE FIGHT!!

OKAY...
URD, LET'S DEMOLISH IT, AND RECON-STRUCT.
AHEM. SINCE THIS DESTRUC-TION'S AUTHORIZED BY BELLDANDY HERSELF...
...I'LL DESTRUCT IT REAL GOOD!
Rumbling in the Heavens, Flashing between the Clouds, Ripping Heaven and Earth Asunder...
...STRIKE, DIVINE THUNDER-BOLTS!!!

REBUILD
!!

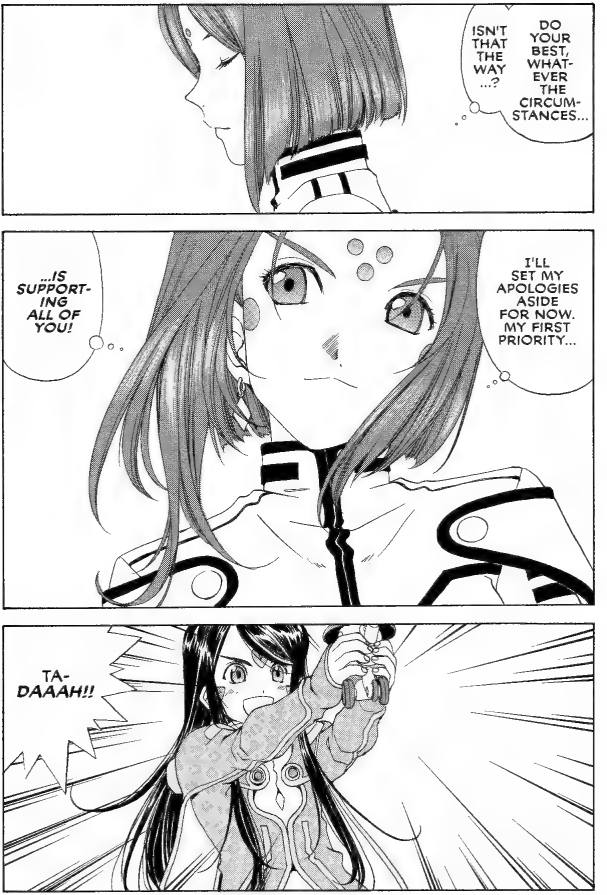
SHLMMMP
YEAH! I'M GONNA CHECK ON BANPEI!
I WONDER IF MY HELMET'S OKAY?
...IT'S INDEED A POWERFUL SPELL.
FORCING ITS TWISTED DESIGN UPON THE OLD REALITY...
IT'S NO GOOD... IT ASSUMED THE SAME SHAPE.

SHE DOESN'T WANT TO COME OUT...
HOW WAS SIGEL ...?
...I UNDER-STAND.
sob
I'M SORRY !!
HAGAL, I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THIS!!

OH, JUST A LITTLE CURSE OF SILENCE ON THIS SUBJECT.
WH... WHAT ARE Y-YOU ...?!
urk
BUT IT'LL LOWER THEIR MORALE.
CONFESSING MAY MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.
...SO YOU WON'T BE TELLING THEM ANYTHING, I'M AFRAID.
AND I CAN'T HAVE THAT. I WANT TO FAN THEIR FURY TOWARDS HAGAL...

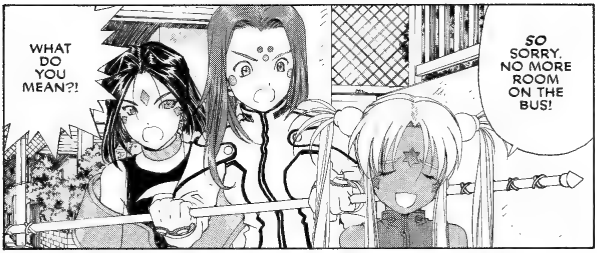
REMEMBER WHO I AM.
I WOULDN'T PUSH IT, IF I WERE YOU.
BUT...
LIND, DON'T FIGHT HER ON THIS.
...
IT MAY NOT SEEM LIKE IT... BUT HILD HAS HER KIND SIDE.

IT'S PROBABLY HER WAY OF APOLOGIZING...
...BECAUSE SHE KNOWS HAGAL'S THE ROOT CAUSE OF ALL THIS TROUBLE.
YOU THINK SO...?
KWING
GNGNGNG
SCRAPE WRRNCH
...WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
...REBUILDING BANPEI WITH JUST HIS CORE CHIP AND BASIC GEAR.

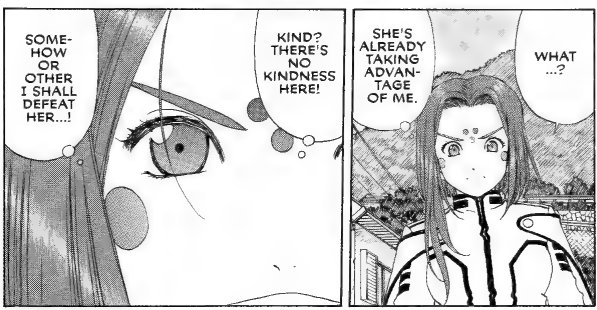

ISN'T THAT THE WAY ...?
DO YOUR BEST, WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES...
I'LL SET MY APOLOGIES ASIDE FOR NOW. MY FIRST PRIORITY...
...IS SUPPORTING ALL OF YOU!
TA-DAAAH!!

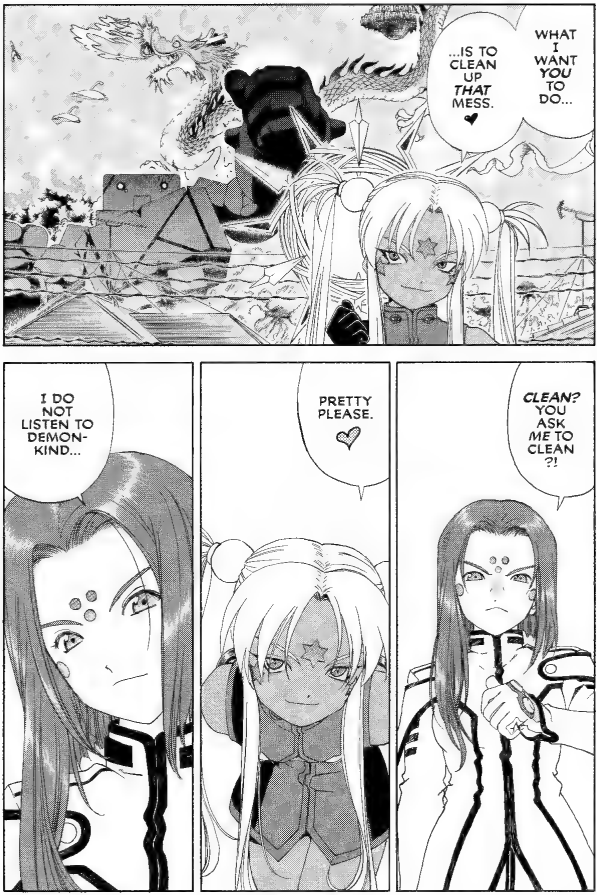
CHECK! ROOK TAKES BISHOP.
WELL, KIND OF A *MINI* MINI BANPEI?
HE'S, UM, ***SMALLER*** NOW, ISN'T HE.
I'LL LET THAT PASS.
...WHAT ABOUT YOUR HELMET, KEIICHI?
?
NOOO !!

RIGHT! AS I WAS SAYING, LET'S GO...
YES, MA'AM! HERE, WATCH MY COUNTER-STRIKE...
HAVING FUN?
WE'RE BOTH READY.
I'M READY.


WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
SO SORRY. NO MORE ROOM ON THE BUS!

...BESIDES, IF YOU WANT TO HELP, I'VE GOT A LITTLE CHORE IN MIND.
THE GATE AUTHORIZA-TION DIDN'T INCLUDE YOU TWO.


SOME-HOW OR OTHER I SHALL DEFEAT HER...!
KIND? THERE'S NO KINDNESS HERE!
SHE'S ALREADY TAKING ADVAN-TAGE OF ME.
WHAT ...?


WHAT I WANT YOU TO DO...
...IS TO CLEAN UP THAT MESS. ♥
CLEAN? YOU ASK ME TO CLEAN ?!
PRETTY PLEASE.
I DO NOT LISTEN TO DEMON-KIND...

HUH? YOU'RE GOOD AT CLEANING? I DON'T GET IT.
...BUT I *LOVE* CLEANING.
THIS IS A TASK WORTHY OF ME.
I JUST SAID I ***LOVE DOING IT.***
I DIDN'T SAY I'M *GOOD* AT IT.
I HAVE A TERRIBLE HEAD-ACHE...

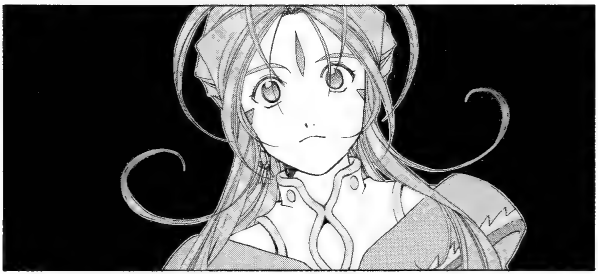
ROAR
RR
...
RRRMMM
WHAT'S WRONG? NERVOUS?

YES YOU HAVE, KEIICHI.
...TRAVELING TO AN UNKNOWN WORLD...
I'VE NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE.
WELL... *YEAH?*

NO ONE CAN TELL WHAT THE NEXT MOMENT MIGHT BRING.
THE FUTURE IS *ALWAYS* AN UNKNOWN WORLD.

IT'S A GOOD THING YOU'RE ALWAYS PROTECTING ME...
...I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, WHEN YOU PUT IT THAT WAY.
YES?
KEIICHI, DEAR ...?
OR...
NO ONE CAN TELL WHAT THE NEXT MOMENT MIGHT BRING.
YOU STATE THE SIMPLE TRUTH.
HOW VERY LIKE YOU, BELL-DANDY...

...WHAT I MIGHT DO.



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English-language version
produced by Dark Horse Comics

OH MY GODDESS! Vol. 39
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Published by Dark Horse Manga
A division of Dark Horse Comics, Inc.
10956 SE Main Street
Milwaukie, OR 97222
DarkHorse.com

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First edition: August 2011
ISBN 978-1-59582-795-1

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed at Transcontinental Gagné,
Louiseville, QC, Canada

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As always, welcome back! We've been receiving some really nice letters recently, so once again I want to let you know that if your letter hasn't shown up in one of the "newer" *Oh My Goddess!* volumes (vols. 37, 38, 39, etc.) look out for it in one of the "older" ones instead, such as the upcoming vol. 19 in October 2011 and vol. 20 in February 2012. Actually, vol. 20 will be the last of the "older" volumes to be reissued in Japanese format reading format, since we made the switch from Western to Japanese with vol. 21. We will, of course, continue to release newer volumes of *Oh My Goddess!* even after we complete the reissue of the older ones. So vol. 40 in December 2011 will come between vols. 19 and 20, but after 20 comes out, we'll then proceed with 41, 42, etc.

Let's return to the feature we've run in recent newer volumes of *Oh My Goddess!*—Kosuke Fujishima's remarks to readers from the early days of the story. Note that of two of the *OMG!* illustrations referenced in the comments below, "Urd in Moonlight" and "Belldandy Riding on the Back of a Goldfish in a *Yukata*," the first appeared as the double-page chapter 37 title spread at the beginning of *Oh My Goddess!* Vol. 6, and the second was done as a special piece not included in either the Japanese or the American graphic novels of *Oh My Goddess!* The Japanese editor of *OMG!* commented that both illustrations, as well as many others from the series, were finally reprinted in the December 25, 2008, release *Fujishima Kosuke Gashu Aa Megamisama 1998–2008*—you probably got most of that, ^_^ but it means *Kosuke Fujishima Art Book: Oh My Goddess! 1998–2008*.

Of course, this art book was published in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of *Oh My Goddess!*, the first chapter of which was published in the November 1988 issue of *Afternoon* magazine. *Afternoon* is still today, as it was then, a monthly publication, and longtime fans of the Dark Horse English-language version of *Oh My Goddess!* will remember that *OMG!* also used to be a monthly publication; that is, instead of being collected straight to graphic

novel (*tankobon*) as is the norm today, Dark Horse, between August 1994 and September 2004, published the first 127 chapters (127 is the third-to-last chapter of vol. 20) of *Oh My Goddess!* one (or occasionally, two) chapters at a time, either as a monthly comic book, or (in the case of chapters 2–13 and 15–16) in our former monthly anthology magazine, *Super Manga Blast.*

What is this all leading up to? (You dearly hoped it was leading up to something ^_^) Well, one of the advantages of publishing *Oh My Goddess!* as a monthly comic was that you could read the story at the pace the creator intended. But one of the disadvantages for the publisher (i.e., Dark Horse, although it was also a common problem for all U.S. manga companies at the time) was the constant need to find cover art. If you stop to think about it, each issue of an American comic book has a separate cover illustration done for it. In fact, the cover illustration is considered such an important marketing tool in the US comics industry that it's often done by a different—and often more prestigious—artist, and in a different style, than the actual story inside.

The idea of having a different artist do the cover than the interior story would be a strange approach in Japan; the only creator I can think of offhand who does this on a regular basis is Eiji Otsuka (*The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service, MPD Psycho*). But (getting back to the point—oh, so near it! ^_^) there is simply less demand for manga cover illustrations in general in Japan, because almost all manga are first published in anthology magazines, such as *Afternoon.* Even though *Oh My Goddess!* might be considered the flagship title of *Afternoon* (it is, not surprisingly, its longest-running series), it is, only one title among many in the magazine.

How many? Well, during the time the chapters you've just read (chapters 243–249) ran in *Afternoon* (to be exact, they were in the January through July 2009 issues), *Oh My Goddess!* was sharing space with thirty-eight other manga! No wonder *Afternoon's* motto is "MANGA AGGRESSION!"—each issue of the magazine is literally a thousand pages long. Naturally it would be inappropriate for every issue of *Afternoon* to put *Oh My Goddess!* on the cover, and in fact it only happens on occasion; otherwise, the cover spot is used for other *Afternoon* manga, such as *Blade of the Immortal, Genshiken, Vinland Saga,* or *Big Windup!*

Speaking of windups, this has certainly been a big one, but now the pitch—even though, as mentioned above, Dark Horse published well over a hundred issues of the *Oh My Goddess!* comic book, there was certainly never anything near like a hundred *Oh My Goddess!* cover paintings done by Fujishima-*sensei* for *Afternoon* magazine. So what *did* Dark Horse use for cover art? Well, fortunately, Fujishima did lots of color paintings of *OMG!* over the years that

didn't get on the cover, but ran in the interior of *Afternoon* as pinups, or were done for other promotional purposes.

So while you've never seen the "Belldandy Riding on the Back of a Goldfish in a *Yukata*" piece on the cover or interior of an *Oh My Goddess!* graphic novel, if you're an old-school fan of the English edition, you *have* seen it as the cover of *Oh My Goddess!* Part II #8, published by Dark Horse in September 1995. This was the fourteenth monthly issue of the *Oh My Goddess!* comic book, even though it didn't contain *OMG!* chapter 14 as you might expect, but *OMG!* chapter 23! It's another long story, but the original Dark Horse *Oh My Goddess!* comic books, while they *did* start with the first chapter, ^_^ otherwise often skipped and rearranged chapters—for example, the first six issues published contained chapters 1, 14, 20, and 26–28.

Why those particular ones? Well, in part, it was because that way Belldandy, Urd, and Skuld all got introduced to the readers in the first six issues, something you had to wait until vol. 4 to finish doing in the original Japanese. It was thought to be a good idea to bring in the entire main cast as soon as possible for the English-language edition, to hook reader interest. And in retrospect it seems like it *was* a good idea, for after all, it laid the foundation for a North American readership that is still going strong seventeen years later. And of course, today the current Dark Horse graphic- novel edition of *Oh My Goddess!* (hey, you're holding it now!) reprints all the chapters in their original Japanese order.

Right . . . now let's get back to the nineties again, specifically (as always) October of 1991! Matthew Sweet had just released his third album, and the one that made him an indie star, *Girlfriend*. Back before most people had ever heard the term "AMV," Sweet was putting anime into his actual videos (like, on MTV—this was back when they showed videos, of course). It's not too surprising that his songs would be in the English version of *Oh My Goddess!* Vol. 18, including "I've Been Waiting," the second track off *Girlfriend* (the music video featured Lum from *Urusei Yatsura*—also not too surprising, as Sweet has her tattooed on his arm ^_^).

But no one was bringing the wickedness quite like Urd in the aforementioned moonlight picture, which was prompting reader questions like this in that month's issue of *Afternoon*:

"You ever dance with the devil in the pale moonlight?" asked Godzilla vs. the Yomiuri Giants (having signed their name thus, we must take them at their word), twenty-seven years old from Kochi Prefecture. "It's a line from a movie, but it's as though it was written just for Urd." The movie G v. YG quotes is, of course, Batman. *Which* Batman, *you ask? It was the one before* The Dark Knight, Batman Begins, Batman & Robin, Batman Forever, *and* Batman Returns, *so it was just called, er,* Batman. *Twenty-*

year-old Natsu Wa Kirai (meaning "I Hate Summer"—have you noticed by now that fans of the English-language Oh My Goddess! have a tendency to write in using their real names, whereas in Japan . . . ? ^_^) of Saitama Prefecture reflected, "Urd and the full moon . . . Her bewitching beauty is good. But she really **is** mysterious!"

Fujishima replied in that same October 1991 issue of Afternoon, "I rendered Urd in relatively darker colors for that piece, reflecting the fact that it's a night scene and the moon is behind her. The moon itself is a bewitching motif, so I think it was a perfect combination. But what do you all think of the illustration ("Belldandy Riding on the Back of a Goldfish in a Yukata") I did for this month's Afternoon cover? I'll be waiting to hear from you!"

Of course, the readers liked it, even if they showed their usual discretion in doing so—in the November 1991 issue of Afternoon that featured chapter 39 (the conclusion of the "Lord of Terror" story arc, by the way), reader Gokuraku Yarou (meaning "Mr. Paradise"), nineteen years old from Hyogo Prefecture, said, "The cool summer-night atmosphere of the painting was really nice," whereas twenty-three-year-old Sake Nomitai ("I Want to Drink Sake") from Ibaraki Prefecture thought Belldandy looked great in the yukata, "but gosh, that goldfish sure was realistic! I was astonished."

"There was surprisingly little reference material on goldfish," answered Fujishima, "although there was tons of material on tropical fish . . . As I've said before, typically I seem to only find good reference material after I've already finished the illustration, but this time, my editor got me some good material in time, and it was a great help." Mr. Fujishima's remark, of course, shows the difference between doing research twenty years ago and today. Image search wouldn't have been an option, as in the fall of 1991 the web had literally just been invented by Tim Berners-Lee, and at the start there were only five images on it. I don't mean five images of goldfish—I mean, five images, total, on the entire World Wide Web. Mind-boggling, isn't it? By the way, for inventing the web, the queen eventually made Berners-Lee a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Very Hellsing.

Fujishima also mentioned in the November 1991 issue that in September, he attached an extra-large fuel tank to his Suzuki DR250S and finally got the chance to take a trip to the seaside. He was expecting "girls in bathing suits, seaside stalls selling kakigori [shaved ice with flavored syrup], grilled corn on the cob . . . " but what he got was "Zilch. Beaches empty of people, and nothing left but garbage." By September, everyone was gone, so he sadly reflected that 1991 would be another year without a summer for him.

Later that year, in December, Fujishima went to a video arcade, also for the first time in a long while, and was surprised at how many games now featured cock-

pits or seats that moved as you play, as opposed to the standard "cabinet" games that had dominated arcades since the 1970s. He and his friends got so excited playing that they did a lot of shouting and screaming, which earned them strange looks from the rest of the patrons. "Isn't it stranger to play those games in silence?" asked Fujishima.

Loyal reader Godzilla vs. the Giants, commenting on the end of the "Lord of Terror" story, wrote of his admiration for "that attitude of hers, after all she's done. Whether goddess or demon, I'm impressed how Urd never loses herself." From Saitama Prefecture, reader Mo Karada Boroboro ("My Body's Tired Out"), a student aged nineteen, noted that this was also the first anniversary of Mini-Urd's first appearance (the Mini-Goddess strips were originally known as the Mini-Urd strips, as at first they were all about her ^_^).

"It's been a whole year?" replied Fujishima. "I started it just thinking it'd be good filler for the graphic-novel collections, but I never dreamed it'd last this long. Thank you for your support, by the way. Like Urd, I've never lost my self-control, as I don't drink and I certainly don't do drugs. But there may be times when I don't know who I am, when I wonder, 'Maybe I'm not the ***me*** *I think I am . . . ?!' For me, that's where the risk of 'losing myself' lies."*

*The creator's Japanese editor commented at this point, "How like Mr. Fujishima to say this so very calmly. Even if it were the end of the world, Mr. Fujishima would look as though he wasn't panicked at all." The creator's English-language editor reflects that the true reason Urd never loses self-control may be that she never had any to begin with. ^_^*

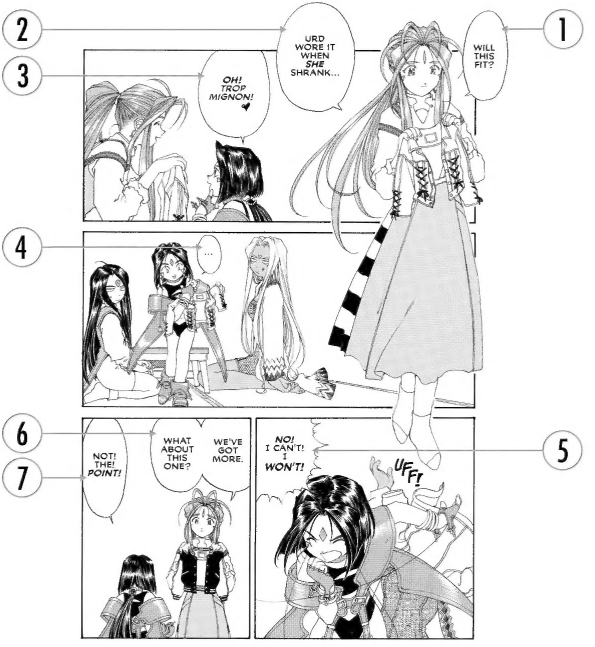
In the December 1991 issue of Afternoon *(chapter 40), a seventeen-year-old reader named "M93R-AUTO9" from Ibaraki Prefecture wrote, "Regarding Mr. Fujishima's comments of last month about losing himself, I feel it showed he's a man of high caliber. And I think it shows in the style of his work and in his stories' themes." Fujishima replied, "I said I've never lost myself, but probably it's just that I haven't been in a lot of critical situations. If something bad were to really happen, I'd probably panic. I'm a timid guy really!"*

Fujishima's editor also noted that the end of the "Lord of Terror" story arc prompted Afternoon *to receive many letters like fourteen-year-old Koutenei's from Miyagi Prefecture: "The story got so intense, I thought the manga itself was coming to an end, but it didn't! So strong is a true manga artist's spirit!" The creator replied, "Dear readers, I'm sorry I worried you. There is still time before the final episode. Please stick with me just a little while longer." We still don't know when the final episode of* Oh My Goddess! *will be, but as you can see, readers did stick with Fujishima-*sensei *a little while longer . . . as in twenty years! See you all in vol. 40!*

—CGH

STOP! This is the back of the book!

This manga collection is translated into English, but arranged in right-to-left reading format to maintain the artwork's visual orientation as originally drawn and published in Japan. If you've never read comics this way before, take a look at the diagram below to give yourself an idea of how to go about it. Basically, you'll be starting in the upper right-hand corner, and will read each word balloon and panel moving right to left. It may take a little getting used to, but you should get the hang of it very quickly. Have fun! If this is the millionth manga you've read this way, never mind. ^_^

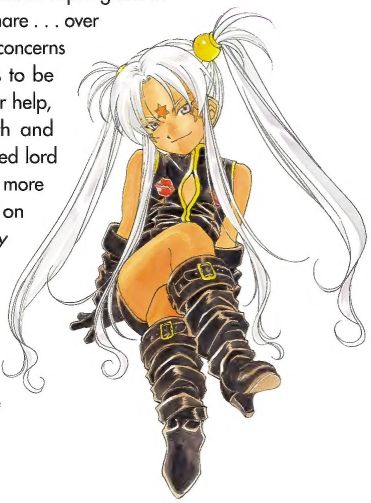


Oh My Goddess!

ああっ女神さまっ 39

THE HOSTILE TAKEOVER OF HELL IS

bearing forbidden fruit all over Earth, as their aggressive new customer-service campaign makes rapid gains in the battle with Heaven for market share . . . over us! But this imbalance of trade also concerns Belldandy herself, and if order is to be restored, it will require not only her help, but that of the goddesses Peorth and Lind . . . all to put Hild, the deposed lord of demons, back on her throne! Plus more commentary by Kosuke Fujishima on the early days of the *Oh My Goddess!* series!



Winner of the 2009 Kodansha Manga Award, *Oh My Goddess!* is the longest-running manga in English, and the inspiration for the recent anime TV series!

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